

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A network-based file-sharing system includes a first host computer and a plurality of other host computers, each host computer having a processing unit and a storage. The first host computer is programmed to generate from the plurality of other host computers a list of other host computers where a user-selected file is stored. The first host computer is further programmed to select a second host computer from the list of other host computers based on an indication of a transfer time from the second host computer to the first host computer and to retrieve at least a portion of the particular file from the second host computer using User Datagram Protocol data packets.

Files may be shared over a wide-area network by connecting a plurality of hosts over the wide-area network; coupling a registry server independent of the hosts to the wide-area network for maintaining a registry containing, for each of a plurality of files, a message digest uniquely identifying the file and an indication of restriction status of the file; and providing a first host having a processing unit, a storage, and a first set of machine instructions storable in the storage and executable by the processing unit for retrieving a user-selected file from at least one of the hosts coupled to the first host via the wide-area network. Access to the file by the first host from the plurality of hosts is based on the indication in the registry of restriction status of the user-selected file.